**Spotted Harrier breeding in the Mukinbudin area.**—In October 1975 a pair of Spotted Harriers *(Circus assimilis)* were observed nesting on the property of Mr. L. E. Waters in the Shire of Mukinbudin. The nest was sited on the edge of a belt of mallee next to a cleared paddock which was fallow. Bounding on to this paddock is the Barbalin water reserve which contains mainly granite outcrops dispersed with low scrub.

The nest was a large platform of dry twigs with some fresh *Eucalyptus* leaves on top. It was placed 25 feet up in a gimlet mallee *(Eucalyptus salubris)*. Unfortunately at this time, after having spent two weeks in the district, I was only able to spend an hour observing the nest. Without being able to see into the nest I came to the conclusion that the Spotted Harriers had young chicks in the nest and that they were feeding.

This sighting is the closest record of the Spotted Harrier breeding near Perth.

—BOB GOODALE, Safety Bay

**Observation of a Ground Parrot in the Cape Arid National Park.**—In February 1965 while driving through the Cape Arid reserve, approximately 100 km east of Esperance, we flushed a green parrot from off the sand track. It flew low over the heath and plummeted into a small patch of mallee. Although I did not have my binoculars I pursued the bird, flushing it from its cover several times. Its flight and general colour convinced me it was a Ground Parrot *(Pezoporus wallicus)*.

In November 1975 I returned to the reserve and found most of it had been devastated by fire and much of the surrounding country being exploited for agriculture. The tracks of vehicles were much more evident. Again a parrot was flushed by our vehicle from off the track in similar country where we had seen a parrot some ten years before. The parrot flew fast and low, plummeting into the heath as would a quail. Several times I flushed the bird to find it each time in a different place from where it had alighted. The birds obviously run very quickly some distance after alighting. All flights were similar, fast and low for about 50 metres.

The striking barring of the tail feathers was easily seen and I was in no doubt that it was indeed a Ground Parrot, and the same as I had seen ten years earlier.

The area where the bird was seen was dry and sandy heathland, which had escaped recent burning. We covered many miles on foot looking for more birds but without success. However they appear difficult to flush, preferring to move quickly over the ground under the protection of vegetation.

—RAY GARSTONE, Woodanilling.

**Notes on a Stranded Pygmy Sperm Whale from Broome.**—On April 16, 1976, a Pygmy Sperm Whale *(Kogia breviceps)* was washed up on Cable Beach, Broome. It was a small (2 metres long) female. Apart from a shallow laceration on the snout and scrapings (mainly on the ventral surface) there appeared to be no external evidence of injury. An interesting feature noted however was that both flippers had been pierced. The right flipper had a well-healed 3 cm diameter puncture in the trailing edge, whilst the left flipper had been notched by a similar hole that had broken the edge.

Souvenir hunters had removed or broken all but six of the fine, recurved teeth of the lower jaw. As with the large Sperm Whale there were no teeth in the upper jaw.

The incoming tide allowed only a hasty internal examination. This revealed that the whale had died only hours earlier. Massive haemorrhage about the mandibles showed that the lower jaw had been drastically fractured while the animal had been alive. This injury may have occurred prior to the stranding of the whale or during its subsequent thrashings as it stranded. A morbid possibility that should not be overlooked is that souvenir hunters had broken the jaw while extracting teeth when the whale was alive but unconscious.

The eyes were large (3 cm in length) in proportion to the total bulk of the whale and of a vivid opalescent green—adapted probably for deep diving. On the other hand the mouth appeared ridiculously small—the length of the lower jaw being less than 10 cm (from the tip of the jaw to the corner of the mouth). It is difficult to imagine this type of whale catching large squid or fish; possibly it feeds on smaller species that school in open water.

Photographs were taken and the carcass was reclaimed by the spring tides which had earlier deposited it on the beach.

—KIM AKERMAN, Derby, W.A.

**First Australian Record of the Pintail Snipe** *(Gallinago stenura).*— On December 28, 1976 Dr. and Mrs. Alan P. Johnson found a recently dead and partly eaten snipe in their garden at Port Hedland on the north-west coast of Western Australia. After examining its tail feathers they concluded that they had the first Australian specimen of *Gallinago stenura* (Bonaparte). This species is not to be confused with *G. megala*, known as Swinhoe's Snipe everywhere outside of Australia and in the first edition of the RAOU Checklist, but called the Pin-tailed Snipe in the second edition and Chinese Snipe in the third.

Dr. and Mrs. Johnson kindly donated their specimen to the Western Australian Museum (registered number A14652). Its measurements in millimetres are: wing 133, tail 51, bill (total culmen) 69, tarsus 33. It has 24 tail feathers, the outer seven on each side being very narrow (the outermost have a maximum width of 2.0 mm).

*G. stenura* and *G. megala* are generally regarded as indistinguishable in the field. In the hand they are readily separated on characteristics of the tail. *G. stenura* has more tail feathers 24 - 26 (vs 20 - 22), including 10 (rather than 8) wide or normal central rectrices. The outer tail feathers are much narrower in *stenura* than *megala;* Hartert *(Die Vögel der paläarctischen Fauna*, vol 2, pp. 1663 - 5) gives a width of 1.0 - 1.5 mm for the outermost rectrix in *stenura*, and 2.5 - 4.0 for *megala* (he is apparently measuring towards the tip rather than at the widest part of the feather). It is also evident from Hartert's data that *stenura* is slightly smaller than *megala*, e.g. wing 129 - 137 (vs 135 - 149), tail 48 - 52 (53 - 60), bill 58 - 67 (61 - 70). The chestnut band across the central rectrices of the present specimen of *stenura* is darker than in our series of *megala*, and the subterminal band is wider and darker (black rather than grey).

*Gallinago stenura* has a more westerly distribution than *G. megala*. It breeds in Siberia and extreme north-eastern Russia and winters in north-eastern Africa and southern Asia, eastwards to long. 121°E (Formosa, Celebes and Flores). *G. megala* breeds in Siberia west to long. 81°E and winters from eastern India and Sri Lanka eastwards to the Philippines, western Micronesia and the Bismarcks.

According to Smythies *(The Birds of Borneo,* p. 210), *stenura* is the commonest snipe in western Borneo, and *megala* the commonest in northern and eastern Borneo, i.e. east of long. 115°E. As this meridian passes through the north-west of Western Australia, it is not surprising